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AUTHOR Evans, Robert J.
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ABSTRACT

Social skills instruction and appropriate individualization of instruction can help mainstreamed handicapped children become accepted by their peers. Modeling (practicing demonstrated behaviors), prompting (correcting behavior when signaled), and feedback (giving corrective guidance) are used to teach the handicapped student such important social skills as accepting responsibility for one's actions, solving problems, negotiating, engaging in conversation, following instructions, accepting and giving feedback, and resisting peer pressure. In order to provide this instruction in the least restrictive environment, the classroom teacher must have adequate preservice and inservice training. (CL)

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Maintaining Least Restrictive Environments and Least Restrictive Alternatives for Handicapped and Nonhandicapped Students in Regular Education Classrooms

Robert J. Evans

Assistant Professor

Troy State University

Troy, Alabama

Running Head: Least Restrictive

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Maintaining Least Restrictive Environments and Least Restrictive Alternatives for Handicapped and Nonhandicapped Students in Regular Education Classrooms

The Education for all Handicapped Act (PL 94-142) [1975] guarantees all handicapped students the right to a free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. This requires the handicapped student to be mainstreamed with nonhandicapped students to the greatest extent possible. Fortunately, the educational programming with nonhandicapped students is with students having comparable chronological ages, rather than the same educational ability levels. This provides for the possible development of age-appropriate positive peer relationships between handicapped and nonhandicapped students. Relationships could be developed which are potentially very beneficial to the often underdeveloped self-esteem of the handicapped students. The effects on the nonhandicapped student are assumed to be beneficial (in a social awareness manner), but are normally very poorly controled.

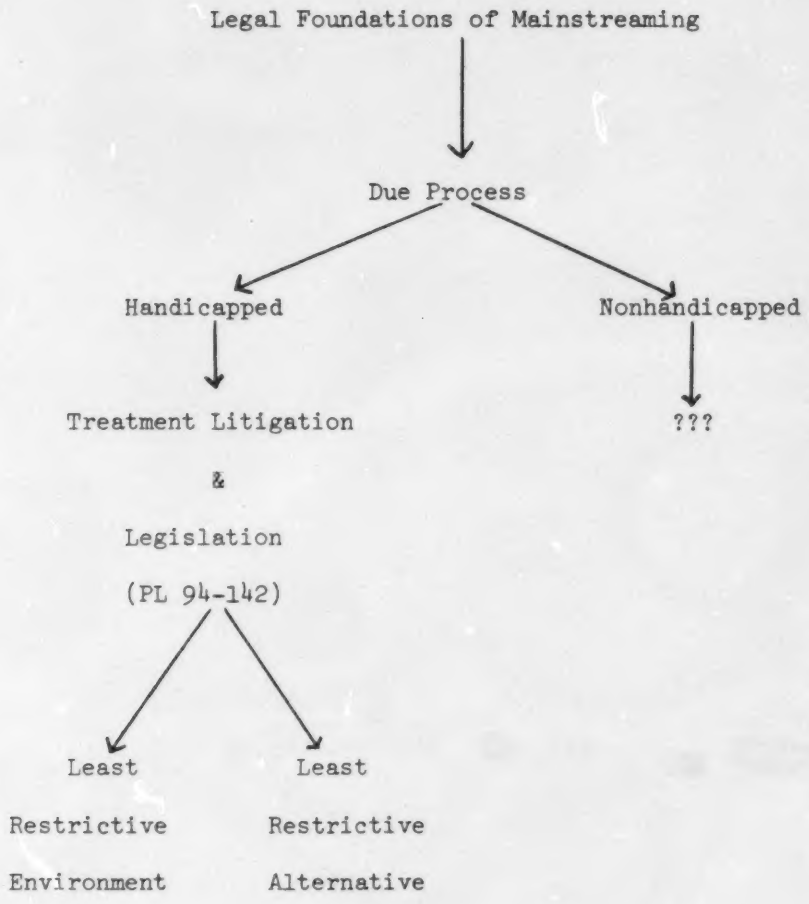
Put Figure 1 Here

The main purposes of this paper are:

1. to critically examine mainstreamed classes;

2. to propose applicable procedures for teaching mainstreamed classes;

Figure 1


Legal Foundations of Mainstreaming
Due Process
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Treatment Litigation
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(PL 94-142)
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Least
Restrictive
Environment
Least
Restrictive
Alternative

3. to propose role playing experiences relevant to the teaching of mainstreamed classes; and

4. to illustrate that the most efficient and productive means available to the regular classroom teacher to fulfill the needs of the nonhandicapped students is to adequately provide for the appropriate instruction of the mainstreamed handicapped students.

Three expected benefits of mainstreaming handicapped students which have not yet been fully realized are:

1. that placement of handicapped students in regular classrooms will result in increased social interaction between handicapped and nonhandicapped children;

2. that placement of handicapped children in regular classrooms will result in increased social acceptance of handicapped children by their nonhandicapped peers; and

3. that mainstreamed handicapped children will model the behavior of their nonhandicapped peers because of increased exposure to them (Gresham, 1982).

In fact, a large body of research exists showing that:

1. handicapped children interact less often or more negatively with peers than nonhandicapped students;

2. handicapped children are poorly accepted by nonhandicapped peers; and

3. handicapped children do not model the behavior of nonhandicapped peers unless specific programming efforts are made

(Asher & Taylor, 1981; Bryan, 1974; Bryan, Bryan, & Sonnefeld, 1982; Gottlieb, 1975; Strain, Shores, & Kerr, 1976).

Put Figure 2 Here

However, there is also adequate evidence indicating that social skills training and carefully planned modeling programs can help both the special education teacher and regular education teacher overcome these inadequacies in the mainstreamed classroom (Day, Fox, Shores, Lindeman, & Stowitschek, 1983; Gresham, 1982).

It is the contention of this paper that, through the use of social skills instruction and appropriate individualization of instruction, regular education teachers can become successful facilitators of mainstreamed classrooms (Schumaker, Hazel, Sherman, & Sheldon, 1982). Both the handicapped students and the nonhandicapped students will experience:

1. beneficial social effects of mainstreaming;
2. Least Restrictive Environments; and
3. Least Restrictive Alternatives.

The social skills instructional component needs to be divided into two subcomponents: one for the handicapped students and one for the nonhandicapped students. In order to gain the social skills necessary to function in the regular classroom, the handicapped students appear to require experiential training consisting of:

Figure 2

Benefits of Mainstreaming

Purported	Supported
1. Increased social interaction between handicapped and nonhandicapped students.	1. Handicapped children interact less often or more negatively
2. Increased social acceptance of handicapped children by their nonhandicapped peers.	2. Handicapped children are poorly accepted by nonhandicapped peers.
3. Handicapped children will model the behavior of their nonhandicapped peers.	3. Handicapped children do not model the behavior of nonhandicapped peers.

1. modeling -- practicing demonstrated behaviors;

2. prompting -- correcting behavior when signaled; and

3. feedback -- corrective guidance (Day, et. al., 1983; Schumaker, et. al., 1982).

This author preposes that instruction and competence in the social skills listed in Figure Three would be sufficient for adequate participation of handicapped students in a regular classroom.

Put Figure 3 Here

The nonhandicapped students appear to require specific factual knowledge about handicapping conditions to enhance their functioning in a mainstreamed classroom rather than unprepared exposure. Nonhandicapped students need accurate information about handicapping conditions and handicapped individuals to counterbalance misconceptions previously acquired (Day, et. al., 1983; Schloss & Miller, 1982; Schumaker, et. al., 1982; Scott, 1982). Correct information tends to replace the fears and prejudices bred by ignorance. Preliminary findings appear to show that this is especially true for younger female students (Day, et. al., 1983).

The individualization of instruction component would consist of similar concerns for both the handicapped and nonhandicapped students.

Put Figure 4 Here

Figure 3

Social Skills Instruction - Handicapped

1. Accepting responsibility for actions
2. Problem solving
3. Negotiation
4. Conversation
5. Following Instructions
6. Accepting positive feedback
7. Accepting negative feedback
8. Giving positive feedback
9. Giving negative feedback
10. Resisting peer presure
11. Role taking skills
    a. Cognitive role-taking
    b. Affective role-taking

Figure 4

Individualization of Instruction - Handicapped & Nonhandicapped

1. Basic skills
2. Higher level skills
3. Management procedures
4. Time allotments
5. Physical settings
6. Materials & equipment
7. Note taking
8. Study habits

All students, regardless of the presence or absence of a handicapping condition, deserve to be taught in a manner which maximizes their cognitive potential and enhance their self-esteem. Before teachers can provide this kind of situation for students, they need diagnostic information including learning style, grade level for various subject areas, an analysis of cognitive strengths and weaknesses. While this information is readily available for handicapped students, it is very often lacking for the nonhandicapped students, and must be obtained in order to provide a basis for individualization of instruction (Pugach, 1982; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Allen, 1982). Thus, it is possible that the nonhandicapped students will benefit as the "least restrictive environment", "individualized instruction", and least restrictive alternative of management are implemented by the teacher in the mainstreamed classroom (Fundis, 1981; Mandoli, Mandoli, & McLaughlin, 1982; Schumaker, et. al., 1982).

As previously stated, this paper contends that through the use of social skills instruction and appropriate individualization of instruction, regular education teachers can become successful facilitators of mainstreamed classrooms. This contention can only be supported after several very critical prerequisite assumptions have been adequately met:

1. Handicapped students being mainstreamed into a regular classroom are being appropriately placed in their least restrictive

environment;

2. the classroom teacher has competencies in social skill instruction; and

3. the classroom teacher has competencies in the individualization of instruction.

Assumption number one can only be fulfilled by the elligibility and I.E.P. committees. Thus, only assumptions two and three will be examined in the final section of this paper. Both assumptions need to be addressed during teacher training: preservice training for new teachers, and inservice training for teachers already in the field (Day, et. al.,1983; Lombardi, Meadowcroft, & Strasburger, 1982; Powers, 1983; Schultz, 1982). Teacher trainers need to meet the needs presented in Figure Five during preservice and inservice training.

Put Figure 5 Here

Through the proper teacher training, teachers will be prepared to successfully facilitate mainstreamed classrooms. The major component of facilitating a mainstreamed classroom appears to be the adequate servicing of individual student needs: both social and instructional. Only in this way, will both the handicapped and nonhandicapped students receive instruction in their least restrictive environment and least restrictive alternative.

Figure 5

Preservice Training

1. Teacher trainer attitudes
2. Knowledge
3. Skills
4. Experiential Component

Inservice Training

1. Knowledge
2. Skills
3. Attitudes
4. Prioritization of classroom teachers' needs
5. Incentive

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